INCOMING TELEGRAM - Department of State

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BUI DIEM TELEPHONED ME THIS MORNING FROM MEETING THEN TAKING PLACE WITH THIEU, KY, GENERAL VIEN, CORPS COMMANDERS, AND OTHER TOP GENERALS, AND ASKED TO SEE ME URGENTLY. HE CAME IMMEDIATELY TO THE EMBASSY TO REPORT THAT THE SPECIAL ELECTION COMMITTEE OF THE ASSEMBLY HAD VOTED IN FAVOR OF "BIG" MINH'S CANDIDACY AND REJECTED THE THIEU-KY TICKET. THE COMMITTEE VOTED 6-4 AGAINST THIEU-KY ON THE GROUNDS THAT THEY HAD NOT WITHDRAWN FROM THEIR GOVERNMENT POSITIONS. HE SAID THAT THIEU AND KY WANTED HIM TO INFORM ME OF THE

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SITUATION AND OF THE FACT THAT THEY TOGETHER WITH THE OTHER GENERALS WERE CONSIDERING WHAT COURSE TO FOLLOW SHOULD THE ASSEMBLY UPHOLD THE REPORT OF THE SPECIAL ELECTION COMMITTEE.
COMMENT: IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THE COMPOSITION OF THE SPECIAL ELECTION COMMITTEE IN WHICH FOUR BLOCS HAVE EQUAL REPRESENTATION DOES NOT REPRESENT THE COMPOSITION OF THE ASSEMBLY. IF THIEU AND KY MARSHAL THEIR FORCES IN THE ASSEMBLY THERE IS STRONG PROBABILITY THAT THE ASSEMBLY WILL NOT UPHOLD THE ACTION OF THE SPECIAL ELECTION COMMITTEE IN REJECTING THE THIEU-KY TICKET. FURTHERMORE, THIEU AND KY HAVE WITHDRAWN FROM THEIR POSITIONS IN THE ARMED FORCES IN CONFORMITY WITH THE ELECTORAL LAW. THEY HAVE TAKEN THE POSITION, WHICH I BELIEVE IS CORRECT, THAT THE POSITIONS OF CHAIRMAN AND PRIME MINISTER ARE NOT CIVIL SERVICE POSITIONS BUT POLITICAL AND HENCE DO NOT COME UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE ELECTORAL LAW. END COMMENT.
BUI DIEM ASKED WHETHER I HAD ANY SUGGESTIONS. I REPLIED THAT WHILE IT SEEMED TO ME THAT THIEU AND KY

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Jan Igenberg DATE 10/5/
RDS ☐ or XDS ☐ EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. REASON (S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
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HAD COMPLIED WITH THE LAW, IN THE INTEREST OF DEMOCRATIC PROCESS THEY MIGHT WANT TO CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF STEPPING ASIDE DURING THE MONTH OF THE CAMPAIGN, PERMITTING THE DIRECTORATE TO FILL THE POSITION OF CHAIRMAN AND PRIME MINISTER TEMPORARILY. I ADDED THAT I DID NOT BELIEVE IT WAS REQUIRED UNDER THE LAW, BUT THEY MIGHT WANT TO GIVE IT CONSIDERATION AS A MEANS OF REMOVING ANY POSSIBLE CRITICISM. THIS WAS THE DISADVANTAGE OF POSSIBLY ESTABLISHING A PRECEDENT AS IT CERTAINLY IS NOT CUSTOMARY FOR AN INCUMBENT TO RESIGN OFFICE TO RUN FOR RE-ELECTION. BUI DIEM REPLIED THAT HE THOUGHT THE SUGGESTION WAS WORTH CONSIDERING BUT OBSERVED THAT IT WOULD ENTAIL SOME LOSS OF FACE AND PRESTIGE ON THE PART OF THIEU AND KY.
BUI DIEM CAME TO SEE ME AGAIN LATER IN THE MORNING TO INFORM ME THAT THIEU AND KY WERE WORKING WITH THEIR SUPPORTERS IN THE ASSEMBLY AND HOPED THAT THEY WOULD BE ABLE TO MARSHAL A MAJORITY IN SUPPORT OF THEIR TICKET. HE SAID THAT IN THE MEANTIME, THEY AND THE GENERALS WHO HAD BEEN MEETING WITH THEM WERE ADOPTING AN ATTITUDE


OF MODERATION AND WANTED TO CONSIDER THE PROBLEM CALMLY IN ALL ITS ASPECTS. HE SAID THAT HE HAD NOT RAISED WITH THEM THE SUGGESTION I HAD PUT TO HIM EARLIER ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF THEIR STEPPING ASIDE TEMPORARILY SINCE THEY SEEMED TO FEEL THAT THE PROBLEM COULD BE WORKED OUT SATISFACTORILY IN THE ASSEMBLY. HE ALSO INFORMED ME THAT THE ASSEMBLY HAD APPROVED 10 TICKETS THIS MORNING AND RECESSED UNTIL 4 O'CLOCK THIS AFTERNOON. (BUI DIEM OBSERVED THAT THE ASSEMBLY HAD APPROVED THE CANDIDACY OF LAWYER DZU THIS MORNING WHO, ACCORDING TO DIEM, HAS ANYTHING BUT A SAVORY REPUTATION, AND IT WOULD THUS BE PRETTY HARD FOR THE ASSEMBLY TO TURN DOWN THE THIEU-KY TICKET.) BUNKER BT

NOTE: ADVANCE COPY TO S/S-O AT 3:30 A.M. JULY 18.
PASSED WHITE HOUSE AT 3:30 A.M. JULY 18.



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